

IMAGE PICKUP APPARATUS AND  
RECORDING CONTROL APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 Field of the Invention

The invention relates to an image pickup apparatus such as an electronic camera and to a recording control apparatus. More particularly, the invention relates to an image pickup apparatus such as an electronic camera  
10 having erasing means of an image file which was recorded after photographing, and to a recording control apparatus.

Related Background Art

Hitherto, when an image file is erased in an  
15 electronic camera, in order to prevent an erroneous erasure, there is used a measure such that the camera is made operative only when a plurality of switches are simultaneously depressed, an erasing switch is arranged at a position where it is difficult to be depressed, an  
20 advance notice for start of the erasure is displayed when the erasing switch is depressed, the erasure is inhibited when the image file is not transferred anywhere, or the like.

In the above conventional method, however, the  
25 erroneous erasure cannot be perfectly eliminated and there is a case where the image file is carelessly and erroneously erased. There is also a drawback such that

even when erasing the image file which can be erased,  
it cannot be easily erased.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5           To accomplish at least one of the foregoing  
drawbacks, according to an embodiment of the invention,  
there is provided an electronic camera comprising:  
image pickup means for picking up an object; storing  
means for storing an image picked up by the image  
10 pickup means; erasing means for erasing the image  
stored by the storing means; and notifying means for  
notifying of an advance notice of the erasure of the  
image by the erasing means, wherein the notifying means  
changes notification contents in accordance with data  
15 attached to the image as a target to be erased.

          According to another aspect, there is provided an  
electronic camera, wherein sound generating means is  
constructed by a buzzer and at least one of a frequency  
of the buzzer, a sound generating period of the buzzer,  
20 and a sound generating time of the buzzer is changed in  
accordance with the data attached to the image which is  
erased by the erasing means.

          The above and other objects and features of the  
present invention will become apparent from the  
25 following detailed description and the appended claims  
with reference to the accompanying drawings.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a block constructional diagram of an electronic camera of each embodiment;

Fig. 2 is a flowchart of the first embodiment;

Fig. 3 is a flowchart of the second embodiment;

5 and

Fig. 4 is a flowchart of the third embodiment.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Fig. 1 first shows a constructional diagram of an image pickup apparatus according to the first  
10 embodiment of the invention. In Fig. 1, reference numeral 1 denotes a lens unit whose focal distance can be changed; 2 a shutter for controlling an exposing time; 3 an image pickup sensor such as a solid state  
15 image pickup device or the like which picks up an object and also has functions to measure a distance, light, and a color; 4 a sample-hold circuit for detecting an image signal itself from the image pickup sensor 3; 5 an A/D converter for converting the analog  
20 image signal from the sample-hold circuit 4 to a digital signal; 6 a memory control device for controlling a storing operation, a reading operation, and an erasing operation for a storage device; 7 an interface circuit for connecting an external storage  
25 device to the image pickup apparatus; 8 the external storage device attached to the outside; 9a a display device such as LED and/or LCD or the like for

displaying a state of the apparatus; 9b a sound device  
such as a buzzer or the like for showing a state of the  
apparatus; 10 a control circuit which is mainly  
constructed by a CPU and its peripheral circuit and  
controls the whole apparatus; 11 an internal storage  
5 device built in the apparatus; and 12 a switch group  
for instructing to pickup an image, the recording to  
the storage device, the erasure, and the like.

Fig. 2 shows a control flowchart of the control  
10 circuit 10 according to the first embodiment of the  
invention. First in step S1, when an erasing switch  
comprised in the switch group 12 is ON, step S2  
follows. When the erasing switch is OFF, the  
processing routine waits in step S1. In step S2, data  
15 attached to an image selected at that time is read and  
step S3 follows. The data attached to the image  
indicates whether an image file thereof has been  
transferred to any other storing area before or not. A  
storing location of the data attached to the image may  
20 be a location in the image file or in another file  
attached to the image file. It is assumed that the  
selection of an image is separately performed by a key  
operation and is not a characteristic part of the  
embodiment, so that its detailed description is omitted  
25 here. In step S3, a check is made to see if the image  
file has been transferred to any other storing area  
before. If the image file has been transferred to any

other storing area before, step S4 follows. If NO, step S5 follows.

5 In step S4, a message informing that the transferred image file is to be erased is notified to the user. Specifically speaking, a flickering of the LED, a display of the LCD, or a sound generation of the buzzer is executed. For example, in the embodiment, in case of flickering the LED, it is assumed that a green LED is lit on for 250 microseconds at a flickering  
10 period of 1 Hz. In case of displaying the LCD, it is assumed that an "OK" mark and an "ERASING" mark are always indicated and an "ATTENTION" mark is indicated for only 250 microseconds. In case of the sound generation of the buzzer, it is assumed that a sound of  
15 a frequency of 4 kHz is generated for only 250 microseconds at a period of 1 Hz.

By performing the notification as mentioned above in step S4 by at least one of those methods, a message that the image to be erased has already been  
20 transferred to another storing area is notified to the user of an electronic camera, and step S6 follows. In step S6, when the erasing switch is turned off from the ON state, the processing routine is finished. If NO, step S8 follows. In step S8, the transferred image  
25 file is erased while displaying the "ERASING" mark and the processes are finished.

When it is determined that the image is not yet

transferred, in step S5, a message that the image file which is not transferred is to be erased is notified to the user. Specifically speaking, the flickering of the LED, the display of the LCD, or the sound generation of the buzzer is executed in a state different from that in case of erasing the transferred image file. For example, in case of flickering the LED, it is assumed that a red LED is lit on for 10 seconds at a flickering period of 4 Hz. In case of displaying the LCD, a "WARNING" mark is always indicated, the "ERASING" mark is flickered at a period of 2 Hz, and the "ATTENTION" mark is indicated for 10 seconds. In case of the sound generation of the buzzer, a sound of a frequency of 400 Hz is generated for 10 seconds at a period of 4 Hz.

15           The notification as mentioned above in step S5 is performed by at least one of the above methods, thereby notifying that the image to be erased is not transferred to another storing area to the user of the electronic camera. Step S7 follows. In step S7, when the erasing switch is turned off from the ON state, the processing routine is finished. When the erasing switch is ON, step S9 follows. In step S9, the image file which is not transferred is erased while displaying the "ERASING" mark. The processing routine is finished.

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With this construction, before the erasure, the user can know whether the image has been transferred to

another storing area or not in steps S4 and S5.

Therefore, by turning off the erasing switch in a predetermined time, the erroneous erasure can be prevented.

5           Fig. 3 shows a control flowchart of the control circuit 10 in the second embodiment of the invention. First in step S11, when the erasing switch comprised in the switch group 12 is ON, step S12 follows. If NO, step S11 follows. In step S12, data attached to the  
10 image selected in this instance is read and step S13 follows. The data attached to the image shows whether the image file has been transferred to another storing area before or not. A storing location of the data may be a location in the image file or in another file  
15 attached to the image file. It is assumed that the selection of the image is separately performed by a key operation and is not a feature of the embodiment. Therefore, its detailed description is omitted here. In step S13, a check is made to see if the image file  
20 has been transferred to any other storing area before. If the image file has been transferred to any other storing area before, step S14 follows. If NO, step S15 follows.

          In step S14, a message informing that the  
25 transferred image file is to be erased is notified to the user. Specifically speaking, a flickering of the LED, a display of the LCD, or a sound generation of the



buzzer is executed. For example, in the embodiment, in case of flickering the LED, it is assumed that a green LED is lit on for 250 microseconds at a flickering period of 1 Hz. In case of displaying the LCD, it is  
5 assumed that the "OK" mark and the "ERASING" mark are always indicated and the "ATTENTION" mark is indicated for only 250 microseconds. In case of the sound generation of the buzzer, it is assumed that a sound of a frequency of 4 kHz is generated for only 250  
10 microseconds at a period of 1 Hz.

By performing the notification as mentioned above in step S14 by at least one of those methods, a message that the image to be erased has already been transferred to another storing area is notified to the  
15 user of the electronic camera, and step S16 follows. In step S16, when the erasing switch is turned off from the ON state, the processing routine advances to step S18. When the ON state continues, step S22 follows. In step S18, a check is made to see if a predetermined  
20 time T1 has elapsed from the turn-on of the erasing switch to the turn-off thereof. When the predetermined time T1 elapses after the turn-on of the erasing switch, step S20 follows. If NO, the image file is not erased but the processing routine is finished. The  
25 transferred image file is erased while displaying the "ERASING" mark in step S20 and the processes are finished.



When the ON state of the erasing switch continues, a check is made in step S22 to see if a predetermined time T2 has elapsed after the turn-on of the erasing switch. When the predetermined time T2 elapses after the erasing switch was turned on, step S24 follows. If NO, the processing routine is returned to step S16.

When it is determined that the image is not yet transferred, in step S15, a message that the image file which is not transferred is to be erased is notified to the user. Specifically speaking, the flickering of the LED, the display of the LCD, or the sound generation of the buzzer is executed in a state different from that in case of erasing the transferred image file. For example, in case of flickering the LED, it is assumed that the red LED is lit on for 10 seconds at a flickering period of 4 Hz. In case of displaying the LCD, the "WARNING" mark is always indicated, the "ERASING" mark is flickered at a period of 2 Hz, and the "ATTENTION" mark is indicated for 10 seconds. In case of the sound generation of the buzzer, a sound of a frequency of 400 Hz is generated for 10 seconds at a period of 4 Hz.

The notification as mentioned above in step S15 is performed by at least one of the above methods, thereby notifying that the image to be erased is not transferred to another storing area to the user of the electronic camera. Step S17 follows.

In step S17, when the erasing switch is turned off from the ON state, step S19 follows. If NO, step S23 follows. In step S19, a check is made to see if a predetermined time T3 has elapsed from the turn-on of the erasing switch to the turn-off thereof. When the  
5 predetermined time T3 elapses after the turn-on of the erasing switch, step S21 follows. If NO, the processing routine is finished. In step S21, the image file which is not transferred is erased while  
10 displaying the "ERASING" mark and the processes are finished.

When the ON state of the erasing switch is continued, a check is made in step S23 to see if a predetermined time T4 has elapsed after the erasing  
15 switch was turned on. When the predetermined time T4 elapses after the turn-on of the erasing switch, step S24 follows. If NO, the processing routine is returned to step S17. In step S24, a message informing that the erasing operation was stopped is displayed and the  
20 processing routine is finished. With this construction, before the image is erased, the user can know whether the image has been transferred to another storing area or not in steps S14 and S15. Therefore, the erroneous erasure can be prevented by turning off  
25 the erasing switch from the ON state for a time shorter than the predetermined times T1 and T3. If the erasing switch is erroneously turned on and the predetermined

times T1 and T3 has elapsed, by holding the erasing switch in the ON state for the predetermined times T2 and T4 or more, the erasure of the image file can be also cancelled and the erroneous erasure can be prevented even in this case. There are the relations of  $(T1 < T2)$  and  $(T3 < T4)$  among the predetermined times T1 to T4. By setting  $(T1 < T3)$ , as for the image file which is not transferred, an advance notice of the erasure of a longer time can be performed as compared with the time in case of the transferred image file. The erroneous erasure of the original image which is not transferred can be prevented.

Fig. 4 shows a control flowchart of the control circuit 10 according to the third embodiment of the invention. First in step S31, when the erasing switch provided in the switch group 12 is ON, step S32 follows. If NO, step S31 follows. In step S32, data attached to the image selected at that time is read and the processing routine advances to step S33. The data attached to the image shows whether the image file has been transferred to any other storing area before or not. A storing location of the data may be a location in the image file or in another file attached to the image file. It is assumed that the selection of an image is separately performed by a key operation and is not a characteristic part of the embodiment, so that its detailed description is omitted here. In step S33,

a check is made to see if the image file has been transferred to any other storing area before. If the image file has been transferred to any other storing area before, step S34 follows. If NO, step S35 follows.

In step S34, a message informing that the transferred image file is to be erased is notified to the user. Specifically speaking, a flickering of the LED, a display of the LCD, or a sound generation of the buzzer is executed. For example, in the embodiment, in case of flickering the LED, it is assumed that a green LED is lit on for 250 microseconds at a flickering period of 1 Hz. In case of displaying the LCD, it is assumed that an "OK" mark and an "ERASING" mark are always indicated and an "ATTENTION" mark is indicated for only 250 microseconds. In case of the sound generation of the buzzer, it is assumed that a sound of a frequency of 4 kHz is generated for only 250 microseconds at a period of 1 Hz.

By performing the notification as mentioned above in step S34 by at least one of those methods, a message that the image to be erased has already been transferred to another storing area is notified to the user of the electronic camera, and step S36 follows.

In step S36, when the erasing switch is turned off from the ON state, the processing routine advances to step S38. When the ON state is continued, step S42 follows.

In step S38, a check is made to see if the predetermined time T1 has elapsed from the turn-on of the erasing switch to the turn-off thereof. When the predetermined time T1 elapses after the erasing switch  
5 was turned on, step S40 follows. If NO, the processing routine is finished. In step S40, the transferred image file is erased while displaying the "ERASING" mark and the processing routine is finished. When the ON state of the erasing switch is continued, by turning  
10 on an erasing cancel switch comprised in the switch group 12 in step S42, the image file is not erased but the processing routine is finished. If NO, step S36 follows.

When it is determined that the image is not yet  
15 transferred, in step S35, a message that the image file which is not transferred is to be erased is notified to the user. Specifically speaking, the flickering of the LED, the display of the LCD, or the sound generation of the buzzer is executed in a state different from that  
20 in case of erasing the transferred image file. For example, in case of flickering the LED, it is assumed that the red LED is lit on for 10 seconds at a flickering period of 4 Hz. In case of displaying the LCD, the "WARNING" mark is always indicated, the  
25 "ERASING" mark is flickered at a period of 2 Hz, and the "ATTENTION" mark is indicated for 10 seconds. In case of the sound generation of the buzzer, a sound of

a frequency of 400 Hz is generated for 10 seconds at a period of 4 Hz.

The notification as mentioned above in step S35 is performed by at least one of the above methods, thereby  
5 notifying that the image to be erased is not transferred to another storing area to the user of the electronic camera. Step S37 follows. In step S37, when the erasing switch is turned off from the ON state, step S39 follows. When the ON state is  
10 continued, step S43 follows. In step S39, a check is made to see if the elapsed time from the turn-on of the erasing switch to the turn-off thereof is equal to the predetermined time T3. When the predetermined time T3 elapses after the erasing switch was turned on, step  
15 S41 follows. If NO, the processing routine is finished.

In step S41, the image file which is not transferred is erased while displaying the "ERASING" mark and the processing routine is finished. When the  
20 ON state of the erasing switch is continued, in the case where the erasing cancel switch is turned on, a message informing that the erasing operation of the image file was stopped is displayed in step S43. The processing routine is finished. If NO, the processing  
25 routine is returned to step S37. With this construction, before the image is erased, the user can know whether the image has been transferred to another

storing area or not in steps S34 and S35. Therefore,  
the erroneous erasure can be prevented by turning off  
the erasing switch from the ON state for a time shorter  
than the predetermined times T1 and T3. If the erasing  
5 switch is erroneously turned on and the predetermined  
times T1 and T3 have elapsed, by turning on the erasing  
cancel switch, the erasure of the image file can be  
cancelled and the erroneous erasure can be prevented.

Although each of the foregoing embodiments has  
10 been described on the assumption that the control  
circuit 10 holds the data attached to the image,  
specifically speaking, a message informing that the  
transfer instructing switch in the switch group 12 was  
depressed can be also stored in an internal RAM of the  
15 control circuit 10 together with the image number or  
the image number when the image signal is transferred  
from the internal storage device 11 to the external  
storage device 8 can be also stored into the internal  
RAM together with a fact of the transference.

20 In the step of displaying that the image file  
which is not transferred is to be erased, an  
instruction to again depress the erasing switch in  
order to forcibly erase the image file can be also  
displayed simultaneously with the display.

25 Although the embodiments have been described above  
with respect to the example of the electronic camera,  
particularly, when controlling with respect to the



recording, reading, and erasing, each embodiment can be also applied to a case of a recording control apparatus in which the easy erasure of the recording information due to a special awakening of attention and  
5 carelessness upon erasing is prevented.

According to each of the embodiments as described above, by changing the display format of the display device in accordance with the data attached to the image when erasing the image file, the user judges the  
10 state of the image and can prevent the erroneous erasure. Since the data attached to the image includes data regarding the presence or absence of the transfer of the image file or the like from the storing area where the image is stored at present to another storing  
15 area, the user judges whether the image file is an image file which has already been transferred to another storing area and can be erased or an image file existing in only such a storing area, and can prevent erroneous erasure.

20 The presence or absence of the transference can be distinguished by the LED by at least one of the color of the LED, the flickering period of the LED, and the light-on time of the LED, and/or the presence or absence of the transference can be distinguished by the  
25 LCD by at least one of the shape of segment of the LCD, the flickering period of the LCD, and the on time of the LCD, and/or the presence or absence of the

transference can be distinguished by the sound device such as a buzzer or the like by at least one of the frequency of the buzzer, the on/off period of the buzzer, and the sound generating time of the buzzer.

5 Thus, the user simply judges the state and can prevent the erroneous erasure.

By turning off the erasing switch in the first predetermined time, the execution of the erasure of the image file can be stopped, so that the user judges the state and can prevent the erroneous erasure.

10 By holding the erasing switch in the ON state for a time longer than the second predetermined time, the execution of the erasure of the image file can be stopped, so that the user judges the state and can prevent the erroneous erasure.

15 By turning on the erasing cancel switch before the erasing switch is turned off, the execution of the image erasure can be stopped, so that the user judges the state and can prevent the erroneous erasure.

20 Processes of the control circuit 10 in another embodiment will now be described.

When the erasing switch is turned on, a display of the LED or the like is performed in accordance with the data attached to the image file. The display of the LED or the like is executed until the image file is erased. After the erasing switch was turned off, when the erasing switch is again turned on within a

predetermined time, the image file is erased. After the elapse of the predetermined time, the execution of the erasure of the image is stopped.

Even by constructing the electronic camera as  
5 . mentioned above, the erroneous erasure of the image can be certainly prevented.

Further, even in a recording control apparatus, the erroneous erasure or the like can be effectively prevented in a manner similar to the case of the  
10 electronic camera.

Many widely different embodiments of the present invention may be constructed without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention. It should be understood that the present invention is not limited  
15 to the specific embodiments described in the specification, except as defined in the appended claims.